

MEMO

DATE: July 7, 2005

TO: Transportation and Communications Committee

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SUBJECT: Compass 2% Strategy Tools and Resources

SUMMARY:

The 2% Strategy Suite of Services is intended to provide tools and resources to local governments that would like assistance to develop plans and projects consistent with the Compass principles. These resources, available in July 2005, will be offered at no cost to all local governments. In addition, we will make available staff and consultant resources for additional assistance to select local governments based on the selection criteria discussed below.

BACKGROUND:

Integral to the realization of the benefits shown from the Compass visioning project is actually achieving positive change on the ground. SCAG is embarking on a new enterprise, one of working directly with local government partners to help achieve shared goals. One key component of this effort is a series of Demonstration Projects.

The purpose of this exercise is multi-faceted. Change happens at the local level; SCAG is a regional entity and therefore is not party to the many land use decisions made every day in the Southland. Modeling of the Growth Vision clearly demonstrated the shared benefits to the region from some strategic land use planning in select areas. This experiment is about SCAG offering planning assistance to cities that desire it. This incentive based approach is intended to both assist the partner government, while at the same time, learning lessons that can be shared with other cities in the Region. The benefit for the city is having access to SCAG and its consultants, bringing with them a suite of new tools for planning, and the knowledge gained from both the visioning project, and the demonstration projects themselves. In addition to benefiting the cities involved, SCAG will also learn valuable lessons through this 'ground truthing' that can be used to shape future visioning efforts.

The demonstration projects will serve as pilot projects to examine the use of different planning tools to address growth and other needs within a variety of representative areas. While the demonstration sites benefit the local cities, they are also something of a proving ground for regional visioning concepts.

Suite of Services Available

Between 3 and 8 sites are expected for selection. For these sites, SCAG will offer a 'Suite of Services' based on a wide variety of consultant services, with funding dependent on a

local match of 20% to 100%. The availability of key resources that can be brought to bear in a short period of time, with services that are focused, tailored to local needs, and available quickly. These services will be focused on the planning and strategic needs of the areas identified as part of the “2% Strategy”.

The suite of services is provided in a fashion similar to an á la carte menu. All services are available, but only those most desired for each area will be used. This method encourages efficient use of resources and a strategy that is targeted to the needs of the local area. Items on the menu include:

Financial “Tipping Point” Analysis—For this service we analyze a parcel or a set of parcels in a small area to determine the factors that need to be in place in order for redevelopment and infill to be feasible. The analysis involves inputting factors such as building setback, parking requirements, allowable floor-area ratio, and construction costs for various building types into the GIS-based software PLACE³S, which runs a basic development pro forma on the parcels using the inputted data. Changing the inputs changes the resulting return on investment (ROI) values, revealing which policies are hindering redevelopment and allowing testing of new policies to see which will encourage it.

Redevelopment Strategies - In this service we review the recent trends in development in the area, speak with developers to find out their perceptions on redevelopment, and analyze the local development code to find obstacles to redevelopment. Then, working with local governments, developers, and stakeholders, we recommend policies that eliminate the obstacles to redevelopment and infill and develop incentives and strategies to encourage it.

Development Code Amendments - In this service we speak with local policymakers to determine the type of development they would like to encourage in the area, and then draft code language to use in amending the local development code so that it better supports those development goals. This item is a likely follow up step to a tipping point analysis.

Urban Design Solutions—Small changes in urban design can make a big difference in the feel and attractiveness of an area. This service involves an analysis of the urban design elements in an area that are hindering walkability and a vibrant street life. We then generate an urban design strategy—complete with illustrative drawings, land use locations, cross-sections, maps, and a set of recommended elements—that will increase the pedestrian friendliness of an area and encourage an active street life. The strategy is targeted to the specific area, and focuses on the most effective design elements to ensure efficient use of resources.

Public Involvement—In this service we will conduct a public outreach campaign, custom-designed to suit the needs of the local area. A range of techniques can be utilized, depending on the situation. We can craft and mail newsletters, brochures and postcards, design and facilitate workshops, charettes, public meetings & open houses, convene focus groups, conduct an opinion polls, create a website, and generate a media campaign complete with press releases and radio ads.

Photorealistic Visualizations—Particularly useful to help residents visualize the result of redevelopment and infill strategies, this service provides a set of “before” pictures and a set

of digitally enhanced, realistic “after” pictures. This service furnishes local policymakers with a great tool to express the policies of a plan in a visual way, to show citizens the intent behind the policies. It is also an excellent way to visualize the type of development that is demonstrated to be feasible by the tipping point analysis.

Economic Development Strategies—For this service we analyze the development climate in an area, determine the opportunities and the challenges facing it, and then work with local policymakers to craft a set of strategies to encourage economic development in the area.

Site Selection

Sites should represent a variety of economic and demographic characteristics, so that the sites selected display a diverse range of situations. For example, some sites may focus on urban transit corridor infill; others might focus on more suburban commuter rail stations or downtowns, while others still might focus on areas with special needs for employment and goods movement. The goal is for diversity in terms of community size, urban or suburban character, and geographic location within the region. Sites to be selected should involve one or more of the following characteristics with special emphasis placed on the site’s ability to bridge the land use and transportation connection:

Site located within the Compass 2% Strategy Opportunity Areas: Developed area with high density infill, smaller city infill, newly developing areas, transit-oriented development on a vacant or underutilized site, greenfield mixed-use, new transportation investments – from roads to rail to MagLev, aging urban corridor, bus rapid transit, light rail, commuter rail, arterial boulevards & MagLev.